

God is love... perfect love drives out fear (1 John 4, Maldon, May 2nd 2021

I want to talk today about fear. I want to talk about being afraid of the people we fall out with. And I want to talk about love. About Jesus, the man who conquered fear because he was completely loving. The man, who, through the power of his spirit, at work in our lives, is able to restore our relationships and banish our fears of other people.

Have you noticed that the people you fall out with; the people you stop talking to; that makes you afraid? Is there anyone here who has fallen out with nobody? Is there anyone here who has got nothing to put right with anyone? All your relationships are completely fine? Nobody in your class that you are not even slightly afraid of?

Let me tell you a story. This week, I have become friends again with 2 different friends that I fell out with. Both these friends of mine are slightly mad, but they are still friends. I hope you have mad friends. One of them rang me up a few weeks ago on a Sunday night when I was about to go to bed, and he was drunk. After about 20 minutes he told me how to sort out the problems of Ireland, a subject about which he knows nothing, and I know quite a lot. I put the phone down. Now it is very rude putting the phone down, isn't it? I told my daughter, Martha what happened, and she said, 'Dad, he's an idiot, but you have got to apologise.' I realised that I had been afraid to ring him up. And that during the weeks when we were not speaking, I felt cold towards him. So, I did phone him up. And he was thrilled to hear my voice. And he did not really mind that I had put the phone down. When you think about things, they get much worse than they really are.

I came off the phone overjoyed. This emboldened me to tackle the next friend I had fallen out with. When my mother died last year, on May 8th, exactly 3 months from her 100th birthday, he sent me a message suggesting that it would be a wonderful idea to put off her funeral for 3 months until August 8th, and we could have a wonderful funeral celebration on her 100th birthday. I sent him a reply mildly and pleasantly questioning his sanity, and he completely stopped contacting me. He did not even send me a Christmas card. You might ask me, why bother with someone like that, and the answer is, we have been friends for 50 years; I was his best man; Libby is his daughter's godmother, and I would love to reach the end of my life without enemies. So, I picked the phone up and he was delighted. He told me that he was too cowardly to say sorry. That he had started 5 letters of apology to me but could not go on.

So, in one week, I have got two friends back.

And I want to say to all of you: take the reading sheets home. Read again these wonderful words. God is love. There is no fear in love. Perfect love drives out fear. You cannot love God whom you cannot see, unless you love your brothers and sisters whom you can see.

Is there one thing in your life that you can do which is an act of obedience to this word from the Lord, let's say before mass next Sunday: 'you cannot love God whom you cannot see, if you do not love your neighbour whom you can see. Amen.